

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1-30. (Cancelled)

31. (Currently Amended) A key tracking and control system comprising:

- a. a storage unit defining an enclosed, internal space therein, said storage unit **having a panel** capable of being opened to access said internal space;
- b. a plurality of receptacles defined within said enclosed, internal space, said receptacles disposed for receiving a plurality of trackable keys;
- c. **an access portal smaller than said panel;**
- c. a plurality of trackable keys removably insertable into said receptacles **via said access portal** without opening said storage unit **panel** wherein each trackable key is attached to a trackable RFID tag; and
- d. a central controller remotely located from said storage unit.

32. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 31, further comprising a communications link between said storage unit and said central controller.

33. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 32, wherein said communications link is a network connection.

34. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 32, wherein said communications link is a wireless connection.

35. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 34, wherein said communications link is a wireless LAN connection.

36. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 33, wherein said network connection is the Internet.

37. **(Cancelled)**

38. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 33, wherein said network connection is a LAN.

39. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 32, further comprising a plurality of storage units.

40. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 31, wherein said storage unit further comprises a local controller.

41. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said local controller is located in said storage unit.

42. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said local controller is remotely located from said storage unit and remotely located from said central controller.

43. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said local controller has a network connection.

44. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said storage unit further comprises a wireless communications device.

45. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said local controller is in communication with said central controller via the communications link.

46. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 40, wherein said central controller is a control computer.

47. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 46, wherein said local controller is a local computer.

48. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 31, wherein said storage unit comprises a storage cabinet.
49. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 31, wherein each of said trackable objects is associated with an asset to be tracked.
50. **(Previously Presented)** An object tracking and control system comprising:
- a. a plurality of trackable objects, each trackable object having an upper portion and a lower portion;
 - b. a storage unit for receiving and storing said trackable objects, said storage unit having an array of sockets individually defined within the storage unit in the same plane, each socket configured to receive the lower portion of a trackable object;
 - c. said storage unit further having a local controller in electrical communication with said sockets;
 - d. a central computer remotely located from said storage unit; and
 - e. a wireless communications link between said local controller and said central computer.
51. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 50, wherein said communications link is the Internet.
52. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 50, wherein said communications link is a LAN.
53. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 50, further comprising at least two storage units, wherein each of said storage units is remotely located from each other and from said central computer.
54. **(Previously Presented)** An object tracking and control system comprising:

one or more storage units for receiving a plurality of tangible objects detached from said storage unit, each storage unit having an array of adjacent sockets fixed relative to one another, each socket disposed to receive a detached tangible object; and a controller system coupled to the Internet, wherein the controller system stores information regarding receipt of a detached object seated in a socket or complete removal of a seated, detached object from a socket and allows the object tracking and control system to be accessed remotely via the Internet.

55. **(Previously Presented)** A key tracking and control system comprising:

- a. a storage unit for receiving a plurality of trackable keys, said storage unit having a storage compartment defined inside the storage unit, said storage compartment having an array of adjacent, fixed slots disposed therein;
- b. a plurality of detached, trackable keys removably insertable into said fixed slots of said internally defined storage compartment;
- c. a central computer remotely located from said storage unit; and
- d. a communications link between said storage unit and said central computer, wherein said communications link is the Internet.

56. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 55, further comprising a security system in network communication with the central computer.

57. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 55, further comprising an inventory system in network communication with the central computer.

58. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 55, further comprising an accounting system in network communication with the central computer.

59. **(Previously Presented)** A method for managing objects, said method comprising the steps of

- a. providing a storage unit having an array of adjacent sockets fixed relative to one another defined within said storage unit;
- b. providing a plurality of trackable objects, each object detachably seated within a socket;
- c. providing a central controller remotely located from said storage unit;
- d. linking the storage unit to the central controller via a network;
- e. utilizing said central controller to remotely monitor transactions between the storage unit and detached, trackable objects; and
- f. authenticating a user before checking-out a particular trackable object;
- g. checking-out the particular trackable object to the user;
- h. authenticating the user before checking-in the particular trackable object; and
- i. checking-in the particular trackable object from the user.

60. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, further comprising the steps of

- a. providing at least two storage units, each with a plurality of trackable objects removably stored therein;
- b. remotely locating said at least two storage units apart from one another;
- c. linking each storage unit to the central controller via a network; and
- d. utilizing said central controller to aggregate information from each of said storage units.

61. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, further comprising the steps of

- a. providing a monitoring computer in communication with said central controller via a network; and
 - b. transmitting information about the presence of trackable objects in a storage unit to the monitoring computer via the network.
62. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 61, wherein the step of transmitting comprises the step of transmitting an alarm to the monitoring computer based on the unauthorized removal of an object from a storage unit.
63. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 61, wherein the step of transmitting comprises the step of transmitting an alarm to the monitoring computer based on the unauthorized tampering of an object within the storage unit.
64. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, wherein the step of linking is accomplished using the Internet.
65. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, wherein the step of linking is accomplished using a LAN.
66. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 64, further comprising the step of communicating with the storage unit via the Internet.
67. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, wherein the step of linking is accomplished by a wireless communication link.
68. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, further comprising the step of transmitting an alarm from a storage unit to the central controller via the communications link based on unauthorized removal of an object from the storage unit.

69. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, further comprising the step of transmitting an alarm from a storage unit to the central controller via the communications link based on unauthorized tampering with an object associated with the storage unit.
70. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 59, further comprising the step of transmitting an alarm from a storage unit to the central controller via the communications link based on unauthorized tampering with the storage unit.
71. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 64, further comprising the steps of
- a. providing an inventory system in network communication with the central computer; and
 - b. transmitting trackable object inventory information from the central computer to the inventory system via the network.
72. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 64, further comprising the steps of
- a. providing an accounting system in network communication with the central computer; and
 - b. transmitting trackable object billing information from the central computer to the accounting system via the network.
73. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 64, further comprising the steps of
- a. providing a security system in network communication with the central computer; and
 - b. transmitting trackable object security information from the central computer to the security system via the network.
74. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 64 further comprising the step of activating an alarm at the storage unit based on a monitored transaction.

75. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 71, wherein the step of transmitting via a network is accomplished using the Internet.
76. **(Previously Presented)** A method for managing objects, said method comprising the steps of
- a. providing an object tracking and control system with one or more storage units, each storage unit disposed for receiving a plurality of security boxes, each security box capable of containing a tangible object detached from said security box; wherein each storage unit has an array of adjacent sockets fixed relative to one another, each socket disposed to receive one security box wherein each security box has an orientation feature so as to ensure that the security box is inserted into the storage unit in a proper orientation;
 - b. providing a controller system coupled to a communication medium;
 - c. storing information regarding receipt of a detached object seated in a socket or complete removal of a seated, detached object from a socket; and
 - d. allowing the object tracking and control system to be accessed remotely via the communication medium.